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THE SAVANNAH VALLEY AUTHORITY

Progress

SUMMER 1990

A publication of The Savannah Valley Authority of South Carolina—a State Agency responsible for economic development in the Savannah River Basin.

GEORGIA AUTHORITY ADOPTS SVA POSITION ON RUSSELL LAKE DEVELOPMENT

The Elbert County-Lake Richard B. Russell Development Authority (ECLRA) has adopted SVA's position on limited and controlled development at Lake Russell. This step is particularly important in that it demonstrates a consistent approach for development of the Lake from the two states that form its boundaries.

The Georgia Authority previously had called for the designation of at least 25% of shoreline outside the 300-foot collar for residential development. In addition, it called for other modifications to the current Lakeshore Management Plan relating to permits, brushing and limbing on the collar land, and construction of boat docks.

SVA's position has been to develop only a small portion of shoreline (about 2% or ten miles) for a water-based recreation and residential community.

SVA is continuing to coordinate the environmental analysis of public lands in South Carolina with the Georgia Authority and representatives of the Georgia Governor's Office.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT SELECTED FOR RICHARD B. RUSSELL PROJECT

The Savannah Valley Authority has contracted with Edward Pinckney/Associates, Ltd. to perform the environmental analysis and other services related to property proposed for acquisition and development at Lake Russell near Calhoun Falls.

The research will include identifying historic sites, rare or endangered plant species, endangered wildlife, garbage dumps, "wetlands", etc. Once identified, solutions will be proposed according to the nature of the problem. These may include the purchase of additional lands to offset acreage lost to development, the redesign of any project plans, or the enhancement of conservation efforts.

The Savannah Valley Authority received proposals from 16 environmental consulting firms. The selection committee reviewed the proposals and made recommendations to the Board of Directors.

The State of South Carolina requires an environmental assessment of any land proposed for state acquisition.

RUSSELL PROJECT LAND APPRAISALS COMPLETE

The Savannah Valley Authority has provided copies of property appraisals to landowners in the area proposed for acquisition for the Authority's Lake Russell development project. The appraisals were carried out by a qualified appraiser according to requirements established by the state government.

SVA has indicated its interest in negotiating the acquisition of the property. The Authority will pay for the cost of a second appraisal at the request of any landowner dissatisfied by the value placed on his/her property by the initial appraisal. The landowner may choose another appraiser whose qualifications and fees are pre-approved by the state Budget and Control Board.

AGENCIES COLLABORATE TO ENSURE ADEQUATE WILDLIFE HABITAT

The Savannah Valley Authority staff and consultants have had a series of meetings with S. C. PRT, S. C. Wildlife and Marine Resources, and U. S. Fish and Wildlife to work out a method of analyzing wildlife habitat values related to the Lake Russell project. SVA hopes that this on-going communication will result in a method of securing adequate wildlife habitat acreage to help the Corps of Engineers meet its wildlife mitigation requirements for Lake Russell.

SVA EXPLORES SLUDGE DISPOSAL ALTERNATIVES

In an effort to extend the capacity of the Rocky Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant near McCormick, the Savannah Valley Authority has been exploring alternative ways of disposing of stabilized domestic sludge.

Dr. Richard K. White of Clemson University is considered to be an expert in this field and has been working with SVA and the McCormick Commissioners of Public Works (CPW) to determine the feasibility of such an activity. The proposal generally would involve the use of stabilized sludge on agricultural lands near the treatment plant to increase both the efficiency of the plant and the fertility of the land. Such a use may extend the life of the treatment plant five to seven years.

The Authority's Chief Engineer, Lee Haines, will work closely with Dr. White in the preparation of the preliminary engineering report and permitting request.

SAVANNAH LAKES VILLAGE PROGRESSES

At the "State of the Village" program held in February, Cooper Communities, Inc., presented the "score" for Savannah Lakes Village's first year of operations. The figures released included 200 new jobs in McCormick County and \$21.3 million in private investment. The company developed 976 single-family homesites and constructed 14 miles of public roads, water, and sewer lines. The sale of 462 homesites accounted for a sales volume of \$7,168,644 for 1989. These are impressive numbers, since actual lot sales did not commence until mid-April of this year.

The 80-room Lodge and Administrative Offices are now complete. The Restaurant and Lounge are scheduled to open in early June, and the Club House in October, with the Golf Course to follow shortly thereafter.

AUTHORITY ESTABLISHES PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURE

The Savannah Valley Authority has established a procedure to involve the public more directly in its actions relating to the proposed Lake Russell project. In essence, SVA will seek to identify a single point of contact at a number of agencies, organizations, and governmental units that have an interest in the Lake Russell area.

The proposal identifies four types of advisors:

- 1) The three groups directly charged with management and development of the Lake Russell area: SVA, Elbert County-Lake Richard B. Russell Development Authority, and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Savannah District).
- 2) Environmental organizations, to include the Sierra Club, South Carolina Wildlife Federation, and the Nature Conservancy.
- 3) Local governments and related organizations, to include Abbeville County Council, Calhoun Falls Town Council, Abbeville County School District #60, Abbeville County Development Board, Calhoun Falls Chamber of Commerce, Abbeville County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Upper Savannah Council of Governments.
- 4) State agencies and committees, to include the Departments of Health & Environmental Control; Parks, Recreation & Tourism; Archives & History; and Wildlife & Marine Resources. Also, the State Development Board, Water Resources and Land Resources Conservation Commissions, Governor's Office, Budget and Control Board, and House Ways & Means and Senate Finance Committees.

SVA staff will conduct meetings with the various advisory groups on a regular basis to inform them about progress and to solicit input regarding particular aspects of the project.

SVA DIRECTOR PARTICIPATES IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE

SVA Executive Director Morrison Parrott participated in an environmental conference held September 26-28, 1989 at the University of South Carolina-Aiken. The conference was sponsored by Westinghouse, operator of the Savannah River Site. A major portion of the conference was directed toward multi-objective management of the Savannah River Basin.

CATCHINGS NAMED TO PIEDMONT TEC BOARD

Fred Catchings, Economic Development Director of the SVA, has been named to the Board of Visitors of Piedmont Technical College (PTC). His two-year term began in October. The Board of Visitors serves as an advisory and promotional function for the college.

In addition, Catchings is participating in a Strategic Planning Forum to assist PTC establish a comprehensive plan that will carry it into the 21st century.

SVA, LOCAL, REGIONAL OFFICIALS SEEK SOLUTION TO WASTEWATER TREATMENT NEEDS

Horse Creek Transmission Line

Although to many it may sound far-fetched, the Authority and the local governments from Calhoun Falls to Aiken County are still exploring the possibility of establishing a 72-mile sewer trunk line that would provide environmentally safe wastewater treatment for that development corridor. The estimated \$54 million price tag would, obviously, have to be shared by Federal, State, and local governments. In order to make the project feasible, the local governments would have to pay no more than what it would ordinarily cost to provide for their wastewater treatment needs individually. The Federal and State governments would have to pay the balance as an incentive to achieve a region-wide solution to the wastewater treatment problem. The Upper Savannah and Lower Savannah Councils of Governments and the Authority are continuing to pursue this plan.

Two-County Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant

Realizing that the Horse Creek transmission line may never materialize, efforts are underway to finalize plans for a treatment plant that would meet the demands of the Calhoun Falls area and upper McCormick County. A discharge permit for a 3.25 million gallon per day waste treatment plant, with a discharge point into Stevens Creek south of Plum Branch, has already been granted to McCormick County. Efforts are currently under way to modify that permit to better reflect long-term growth conditions in the Basin. Although neither of the two long-term solutions are needed for at least several years, the Authority is working to make sure that the plans and the financing are in place when the need does arise.

Getting the Most out of Current Wastewater Treatment Facilities

The Authority has been working very closely with the McCormick Commissioners of Public Works, McCormick County, and the Town of Calhoun Falls to figure out ways of making the existing wastewater treatment plants operate more efficiently and in a more cost effective manner. Because both the McCormick CPW and Calhoun Falls wastewater treatment plants are the "birds in the hand" for regional development, it is extremely important to extend the life of those plants as long as possible.

The sewage/sludge disposal demonstration project, being conducted by the McCormick CPW and partially funded by the Authority, is one such way to get more treatment capacity out of the plants without a great deal of additional capital cost.

Rate Analyses

The Authority is also assisting those jurisdictions in determining the actual lowest cost for operating the systems by conducting rate analyses for those systems. These rate analyses apply for the water systems as well as sewer systems.

Abbeville County Water System

The Authority is providing technical assistance to the Abbeville County Council and County Director to analyze the need for and cost of a county-wide water system. The information that is currently being gathered will be presented to the public to help them make a decision in the November referendum concerning a county-wide water system. The current emphasis of the study centers on how to complete a Regional water system that was proposed a number of years ago by the Tri-County Water and Sewer Authority.

WATER AND WASTEWATER FACILITIES CRITICAL TO DEVELOPMENT

Although not as glamorous as recreational, residential, or industrial development, water and sewage facilities are the critical factors in making a development either happen or not happen. For that reason, the Savannah Valley Authority has established water and sewage development as high priorities for the Savannah River Basin. The Authority sees that regionalizing these facilities, wherever appropriate, can provide long-term cost savings as well as increasing development opportunities throughout the Basin.

In this time of reduced infrastructure grants, the local and State governments are stuck with the construction bill. A few years ago, user rates had to account for no more than one-third of the debt service on new or expanded water and sewer facilities; user rates now have to pay the whole tab. The lack of grants and the increased cost of meeting environmental regulations lead to user rates that, to some, seem astronomical. A major cause of this perception is that water and sewer user charges have for decades been set too low. Now, the difference between those long-standing but artificially low rates, and the real cost of operating water and sewer facilities is causing the policy makers and the rate payers to squirm.

The importance of water and sewer expansion for local economic development and the real cost of those services are realities that all of us have to deal with. The Savannah Valley Authority, serving as both the State economic development agency for this area and as a regional water and sewer agency, is working very closely with the local governments in the Basin to solve immediate and long-term problems related to these critical public utilities.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS LAUNCH FRESHWATER COAST™ PROMOTION

The Savannah Valley Authority is one of nine tourism and development organizations that have banded together to promote the upstate as South Carolina's Freshwater Coast™. Other members of the "Freshwater Coast™ Coalition" are Abbeville County Development Board, City of Anderson, County of Anderson, Duke Power Company, Old Ninety Six District Tourism Commission, Pendleton District Historical and Recreational Commission, Saluda River Electric Cooperative, and Savannah Lakes Village.

The Coalition takes its name from the abundance of freshwater lakes and rivers that are found in the area. Key among these are the Savannah Lakes — Thurmond, Russell, and Hartwell. When combined with Lakes Greenwood, Secession, Jocassee, and Keowee, these form an important destination for lake-oriented recreation. The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (PRT) has recognized this fact by using the "Freshwater Coast™" terminology prominently in the 1990 edition of its Vacation Guide.

The Coalition officially launched the promotional effort on February 1 at a reception attended by approximately 180 people at Hilton Head Island. Held during the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Travel, the gathering provided an excellent opportunity to promote the region to travel writers, tourism professionals, and government officials. Guests were treated to a traditional supper of catfish and barbecue catered by the Inn on the Square of Greenwood and were entertained by a singer provided by the Belmont Inn of Abbeville. Area businesses donated doorprizes that reflected the "Freshwater" theme, and Northwest Airlines, Inc., donated the Grand Prize of two round-trip tickets from Greenville-Spartanburg Airport to Memphis, Tennessee.

The Coalition is now considering a state charter, gaining tax-exempt status, and undertaking ongoing promotional activities. Among these activities are the production of sweatshirts and T-shirts with the Freshwater Coast™ logo and the establishment of a "Freshwater Coast™ Festival". As envisioned, the festival would be a single-day event, with activities going on at locations throughout the Region.

PRT FORMS NEW DIVISION

The S. C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (PRT) has recently established a Community Development Division to work specifically with rural tourism and recreation development projects. Martha Beckman has been named Director.

A major aspect of the Community Development program is PRT's coordination with other state and local agencies. SVA staff members have met with PRT representatives to discuss several projects of mutual interest in the Savannah Lakes Region.

Two projects include the re-establishment of a tourism center on U. S. Highway 378 at Baker Creek State Park, and the enhancement of Abbeville's reputation as an antiques center.

SVA ESTABLISHES REGIONAL GRANTS FUND

The Savannah Valley Authority Board of Directors has established a procedure for awarding grants to local and regional organizations and governments to support the general work and purposes of the Savannah Valley Authority.

Grants will be made for promotional activities and for engineering & construction activities.

Promotional grants generally will be limited to \$1500 per applicant per year. Most will range from \$500 to \$1000. However, communities selected by the South Carolina Downtown Development Association for the "Main Street" or "Small Towns" programs are eligible for \$5000 per year for up to two years if other requirements are met. Additional information about SVA's promotional grants program is available from John Blythe.

Engineering and construction grants will provide support for ongoing SVA projects. Additional information about these grants is available from Lee Haines.

Applications will be accepted at any time, and the SVA Board will award funds at designated times throughout the year.

STATEWIDE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORGANIZATION BEING FORMED

The Savannah Valley Authority has joined several other agencies to form a steering committee to determine the level of interest for a statewide historic preservation organization. The Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation would operate a revolving fund for historic preservation and would engage in preservation education activities. South Carolina is one of only two southeastern states that does not have a private nonprofit organization set up to address preservation needs on a statewide basis.

The committee has compiled a survey of interest and is planning to hold a series of forums throughout the state. One of the forums is scheduled for June 3 in Abbeville. John Blythe serves on the steering committee, which is chaired by John Hildreth of the Southern Regional Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Additional information is available from Blythe at the SVA office.

SAVANNAH LAKES REGIONAL LOAN FUND ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

The Savannah Lakes Regional Loan Fund (SLRLF) is now accepting applications for businesses in Abbeville, McCormick and portions of Anderson Counties. The Loan Fund, which was created to assist businesses to obtain financing and leverage private investment in the Savannah Lakes Region of South Carolina, is able to provide businesses up to 90% financing at below market rates.

This is accomplished through the use of two basic lending options, both of which require the participation of private lenders. The first option is a loan guarantee program, which can provide up to an 80% loan guarantee to assist a business to satisfy a private lender's requirements. The second option is a direct loan of up to 45% of the total project, not to exceed the amount provided by the private lender. The maximum participation by the SLRLF is \$150,000 and the minimum is \$10,000 on either the direct or guaranteed loan amounts.

Loans can be provided for land, building, equipment or working capital. Terms vary depending on the useful life of the assets financed, with the maximum loan term for fixed assets being ten years and for working capital three years. Interest rates will normally be fixed for the term of the loan, but the specific rate will vary with the method of financing, term of the loan, collateral, and the prevailing prime interest rate.

The SLRLF is governed by a newly created Corporation, which is administered jointly by the South Carolina Jobs-Economic Development Authority (JEDA) and the Savannah Valley Authority (SVA). The six member board is made up of three members from JEDA and three members from SVA Boards of Directors. One of the first items of business for the new Board was to approve an investment strategy for the SLRLF, which called for the uncommitted funds to be invested in banks within the region.

Because the Fund requires private participation, and the information required to apply for a loan is similar to private lender requirements, applicants may wish to contact the private lender initially.

For additional information about financing contact Fred Catchings.

SVA BOARD HEARS UPDATE ON HAMPTON COUNTY PROJECT

T. Michael Copeland, President of The Fontaine Company, a Columbia-based consulting firm, recently provided information to the Savannah Valley Authority Board of Directors about a two-part economic development project being planned for Hampton County.

The first component is a large-scale, regional industrial park, developed in accordance with a recently-enacted State Constitutional amendment that allows counties to share revenues and expenses from such parks. The Hampton County park will cover at least 1,000 acres near I-95 at Yemassee and will be shared by four or five counties. The park site is currently served by rail, electric power, and natural gas. Water and sewer will be provided by an extension of the Yemassee municipal system or by a stand-alone system, whichever is most cost effective. The park is projected to create 1,537 permanent jobs within ten years and will result in an earnings increase of \$297.7 million over a fifteen-year period.

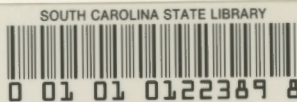
The second component is a residential/retirement community, designed to service the burgeoning retirement market in the State. Two tracts of land totalling 4,900 acres are under consideration. This component is projected to add an additional 1,160 permanent jobs and \$130 million in earnings within twenty years. Mr. Copeland reported that the architectural and engineering firm for the Hampton County project is Stevenson and Wilkenson of Atlanta, Georgia. The original idea for a large-scale retirement development was modified at the recommendation of the Arthur Anderson Company, which indicated that retirement projects already underway in South Carolina would substantially cut into the market share of any new project built in Hampton County. The nearest example of a new retirement community being developed is in Beaufort County.

The industrial component is scheduled to begin development during this calendar year. The residential component will begin development approximately one year later.

Both the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees are considering a \$1 million appropriation in the FY 1990-91 budget for public infrastructure to serve the project site. The appropriation would be made to the SVA in the same manner as the initial appropriation to finance the study.

Encore Earns Second Addy Award

Encore, the quarterly calendar of cultural events published by the Savannah Valley Authority, has been recognized by the Columbia Advertising Club with its second "Addy" award in as many years. The publication earned a bronze award for its Fall 1989 issue. *Encore* is edited by the Authority's Cultural Resources Director, John Blythe. The overall design and graphic illustrations are the work of Sylvia Potts, creative director for Newman Saylor & Gregory of Columbia.



SVA URGES ABANDONMENT OF RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY IN ABBEVILLE AND MCCORMICK COUNTIES; MEETS WITH STATE RAILWAY COMMISSION OFFICIALS

After months of deliberation concerning the final disposition of a railroad right-of-way between Calhoun Falls and McCormick, the Savannah Valley Authority Board of Directors has urged the South Carolina Public Railways Commission (SCPRC) to delete the right-of-way from the State Rail Plan and complete the full abandonment of the right-of-way. Recognizing that the Public Railways Commission is the agency responsible for the State Rail Plan, the SVA Board also took steps to transfer the easement from the Authority to the Commission.

One of those steps was accomplished on May 4 when SVA staff members met with SCPRC Executive Director Robert Parham and Commissioner H. E. Limehouse. The purpose of the meeting was to show the easement to the SCPRC and discuss the reasons SVA was recommending abandonment.

The Authority, acting as the agent of the State of South Carolina, acquired the right-of-way of the discontinued Anderson branch railroad in 1983 to provide future rail service for industrial development. At that time, the rail easement became a part of the State Rail Plan and has remained a part of that plan until this date. The purchase price of approximately \$64,000 was partially funded by a 70% grant from the Federal Rail Bank System as an incentive to keep rail lines intact for future industrial development opportunities.

One such opportunity came in the form of the development of Savannah Lakes Village (SLV). A portion of the right-of-way between Bordeaux and McCormick bordering the SLV property and the Sumter National Forest was abandoned and converted into a public highway right-of-way. This conversion was accomplished when the private developer of Savannah Lakes Village purchased additional property from individual owners and the SVA secured additional easements from the U.S. Forest Service. The steel trestle across Little River in that section of right-of-way proved to be a valuable asset in linking SC 28 and SC 7.

Because development in the portion of the Savannah River Basin served by the right-of-way has taken the direction of recreational and residential development, the need for a rail connector has diminished to the point that the Savannah Valley Authority has resolved to see the rail easement fully abandoned and full property rights restored to the adjacent property owners.

The S.C. Public Railways Commission is the State agency that makes the final determination on disposition of railroad easements and active railroad lines. The Authority has submitted a Quit Claim Deed to the Public Railways Commission that would transfer title to the easement and has strongly urged the Public Railways Commission to remove that section of the easement from the State Rail Plan and abandon it.



SAVANNAH VALLEY AUTHORITY

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